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PAST TRENDS AND PRESENT TENSIONS

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IT SEEMS TO ME

END OF AN ERA

Few now disagree with those who assert that the Second Vatican Council "marks the end of the Counter-Reformation and inaugurates a new Christian era filled with unforeseeable consequences." A clear majority of the college of bishops believes this as is obvious from the debates at the first session. Just as the period following Trent manifested marked changes and adjustments over a former age, so the present Council signifies a fresh orientation in the Church. What Trent endeavored to do in the crisis of the sixteenth century, the present Council is trying to do for our fateful times.

Changes and adjustments are often trying and unsettling, especially where religion is concerned. We tend to canonize many familiar customs, structures and procedures and are apt to regard them as belonging to the substance of the faith. It is possible to forget that the Church has a total tradition lasting nearly twenty centuries. Many things we now do were done very differently in times past. And it is the solemn duty of the Church, especially in crucial moments of her history, to reflect on her nature and mission with a view to changes that can and should be made.

It is understandable that there will be differences of opinion on specific issues. And it is imperative that the people be prepared for the new outlook and the changes it entails. But we are confronted with a world crisis such as has rarely occurred in the past. And the readjustments which the Council is considering have been studied by responsible scholars, prelates and pastors for many long decades.

Those especially dedicated to the apostolate of conversions have a rich stake in the current renewal of the Church. Work for conversions has been almost completely dominated by the Counter-Reformation outlook. Like the householder of the Gospel, the Church is discovering in her treasury old things and new. It would be inexcusable of us to ignore those valid changes that promise to enrich our apostolate.

JOHN T. MCGINN, C.S.P.

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Past Trends and Present Tensions

Rev. Charles Davis

What is happening today in the Church? To ask this question is not to indulge an idle curiosity. Part of a Christian's duty is to watch the signs of the times so that he does not let slip the opportune seasons or moments which God appoints for a particular work. Those who are doing their own work and who are relying on their own strength can choose whatever time they like for accomplishing their purpose. But a Christian is engaged in God's work, and his ability for it is not his own but comes from the Spirit. The opportunities, then, for our Christian undertakings are not of our own making; when it is God's work we are doing, it is for him to determine the favourable moments, the times of grace.

Now, the Spirit who dwells and acts in each Christian dwells and acts in the Church as a whole, and an active receptiveness to the Spirit includes an attentiveness to his action in the Church. It is not for Christians to pursue their own whims, to propagate some devotion just because they like it and think it good, to take up some cause or movement and push it because it accords with their own preferences: it is for them to ask what the Spirit is doing at this time. There are times chosen by God for particular tasks; a moment comes for the accomplishment of some work, and all over the Church men gradually see the need and begin to work at what becomes the common task. It is the hour of grace. Everyone should be up and working with the rest, attentive to the call of God, sensitive to the action of the Spirit and not clinging to a favourite project of his own choosing.

What, then, is happening in the Church? What are the signs of the times? I make no claim to special insight. But none now

is needed. The main direction in which the Spirit is moving the Church has been made manifest by the summoning of the Second Vatican Council and by the astonishing way in which the first session revealed the Church to the Church. However, the movement that has now emerged as dominant is best understood in the light of past trends that prepared the way, and history, too, enables us to assess present tensions within the Church better. This, then, is my purpose: to elucidate the present task of the Church by considering what prepared the way for it and to offer some explanation of present tensions.

The great work of the Holy Spirit in our time is the movement for Christian unity. It is this that gives meaning to all else that is taking place within the Church and in Christendom generally. The twentieth century will always be seen as the age in which Christians of all communions were awakened by the Spirit to the scandal of their divisions and experienced a change of heart over them, the age in which powerful forces of renewal were stirred up by the Spirit in all the Churches, drawing them together. The various movements of renewal we distinguish in the Church, principally the biblical revival, the liturgical movement and the growth of the lay apostolate, are in their purpose and place in history subordinate to the ecumenical movement. They have been paralleled in other Christian bodies. Similar movements have sprung up at more or less the same time,

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though without any clear interdependence. Such movements have brought the Churches nearer to one another. They have made a dialogue possible. They have till now had the preparatory role of leading to a dialogue. Now that the Catholic Church has entered openly and resolutely into dialogue with the other Christian Churches these movements will continue as elements in that overall movement of renewal which is the ecumenical movement.

It is perhaps necessary to stress that the ecumenical movement is a vast movement of renewal that should affect every member of every Church. It is best seen as a general movement of conversion, in the true, biblical sense of that word, namely a turning to God in repentance and in a resolve to undo our past failure to live according to the message of Christ. This is not to suggest that we spend ourselves in sterile efforts to apportion responsibility for our divisions. We can leave that to historians, remembering, too, that God alone can truly judge men's consciences. What is required from us is the recognition that we inherit a sinful situation in which Christ's message of unity and love is obscured before the world, and indeed before many Christians, by our common failure. To accept the situation with complacency is a guilty complicity; the inadequacy of our witness to Christ is excusable only if we are working to overcome it. Since our efforts always fall short, since our present sins continue to impede reunion, we can and should turn to God in humble sorrow, imploring the aid of his Spirit to bring us to a better understanding and fulfilment of Christ's will that his followers should be one in faith and love.

The ecumenical movement does not, exclusively or even primarily, consist in discussions between theologians and negotiations between Church leaders; it consists, above all, in the growing together in Christian faith and life of all the Churches at every level. The contemporary renewal is ecumenical because it is taking place in dialogue, each Church learning how to enrich its Christian life and witness from the legitimate demands of the others. The revivifying action of the Spirit in all the Churches is drawing them closer together, so that the renewal is pointing to ultimate reunion. Renewal with a view to reunion: that is the

pattern laid down for the Second Vatican Council, and that is the pattern of the present life of the Church. Our task is to enter into that renewal and to do so with other Christians in mutual understanding and respect.

The pattern has now emerged with clarity, but how was it prepared? In other words, when did the present movement begin? Here we meet the usual difficulty that it is never possible to mark a break or a clear starting-point in the flux of history. We can always go back to more remote antecedents. But in the limited sense in which we can speak of a beginning for anything in history we can place the start of the present renewal in the period around the First World War. The first stirrings belong to the opening of the century, were deepened during the war and steadily gained momentum afterwards. We can trace the popular biblical revival, the liturgical movement, the rise of the lay apostolate, and the ecumenical movement itself in the narrow sense, back to this period. But underlying them all and fundamental to all that has taken place since was the rediscovery of the Church.

Mystery of the Church

The primary insight, which marks a break-through to a new Christian age, was an insight into the mystery of the Church. What has happened since has been the deepening and widening of that insight, the accumulation of supporting insights and the application of the resulting understanding to part after part of Christian doctrine, order and life. Negatively, it has meant the overcoming of the Counter-Reformation concept of the Church, with its narrow insistence on the juridical, hierarchical, organizational side of the Church's structure; positively, it has been the rediscovery of the inner, spiritual, organic, sacramental structure of the Church as a community. A complementary, partly contrasting concern with the Church can be observed outside the Catholic Church. Protestant Christians have become aware of the importance of the Church in the Christian economy, and a growing interest in the visible structure of the Church has been a noticeable feature of the ecumenical movement. I must confine my attention, however, to develop-

ments within the Catholic Church.

The ground was prepared in the nineteenth century. A richer theology of the Church was first put forward by Moehler at Tübingen. (It is thus very suitable that one of the foremost theologians writing today on the Church, who is at the same time the most clear-sighted commentator on the present situation, Dr. Hans Küng, should be a professor in the same Catholic faculty of Tübingen.) Another great nineteenth-century writer, whose work has influenced much modern thought, was Scheeben. To these two men we must add Newman, though until quite recent years his impact on Catholic theology is more difficult to discern because he did not work within the framework familiar to professional Catholic theologians. A historian of thought will no doubt be able to trace some earlier influence; at any rate, Newman's thought is now coming openly into its own.

These were the seminal thinkers. But great as was their achievement, their thought did not in fact come to fruit in the general life of the Church until the beginning of this century. Historical studies in pastoral theology, carried out chiefly at Tübingen, show that at the catechetical and homiletical level teaching remained under the inspiration of the Enlightenment. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment had caused a further narrowing in Catholic thinking and teaching, particularly in the direction of desupernaturalizing the Church. How the very concept of "religious instruction" smacks of the Age of Reason! So, while theology in some at least of its representatives had soared to great heights, the average Christian had still to be content with juridical categories and apologetical arguments. Some idea of what the unrenewed teaching on the Church was like can be had by turning to the Catechism we still use and reading the questions and answers on the Church.

It took the First World War to upset settled habits and drive people to seek something better. Shortly after it was over, books began to appear expounding the mystery of the Church and setting forth a richer, more supernatural account of Christianity. In Germany there were, among others, the writings of Karl Adam and Romano Guardini; in France similar publications, only partly dependent on Germany.

This first period in the general rediscovery of the Church was the Mystical Body phase. It ran from about 1920 to 1943, the year in which the encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* was published. These decades saw the astonishing spread and dominance of the idea of the Mystical Body. It was all-pervasive. Not merely did it penetrate into teaching and writing at every level, but everything was interpreted in relation to the Mystical Body: ecclesiology naturally enough, but Christology, moral theology, ascetical teaching and pastoral activity. The books of Emile Mersch are characteristic of the time.

The First Phase

This first phase was immensely valuable to the life of the Church. It spread abroad an awareness of the Church as a mystery; it deepened the Christian life of many; it provided doctrinal nourishment for the increasing number of lay apostles; it helped the beginnings of the liturgical movement. But there were weaknesses. The biblical basis was not examined very carefully. The danger of woolly thinking and exaggerations was not always avoided. A sufficient link was not forged between the exalted idea of the Mystical Body and the concrete reality of the Church as a community. Purple passages on the Church tend to lose sight of the distinctions that have to be made, especially when a thorough-going reform is called for. But this last remark anticipates a little. At the beginning of the Second World War, a confused situation existed in Germany in regard to the theme of the Mystical Body. There was conflict, and extremes were found on both sides, one extreme falling into mystical exaggerations and the other excessively hesitant about the whole supernatural understanding of the Church. It was for this situation that the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* was written in 1943. Its balanced exposition of the doctrine, which keeps its richness while avoiding excess, drew largely on the work of the Jesuit, Fr. Sebastian Tromp, who had, it seems, much to do with the writing of the encyclical.

Important as it is, *Mystici Corporis* marks the end of a phase; it is not a beginning but an *interim* summing-up. Already before the encyclical was issued, the

doctrine of the Church was moving into a new phase of development.

In this new and present phase, the People of God is taken as the fundamental idea of the Church. The Church is, of course, as Paul teaches, the Body of Christ, but this profound insight into its mystery is best developed in the context of the more general and more basic understanding of the Church as the new People of God, the Messianic community of Christ. The advantages of this approach to the doctrine of the Church are many. It is supported by a better, more developed biblical theology. In 1942, the year before *Mystici Corporis* appeared, Msgr. Cerfaux published his book, *La Théologie de l'Eglise suivant saint Paul*. In it he took the idea of the People of God as the primitive and fundamental idea in Paul's theology of the Church and pointed out that the teaching on the Church as the Body of Christ modified the earlier idea but did not replace it. This example illustrates the general fact that the theme of the People of God allows a fuller, better balanced presentation of biblical teaching on the Church than did the earlier, almost exclusive concentration on the idea of the Mystical Body.

A further advantage of seeing the Church as the People of God is that the Church is immediately placed in the context of the history of salvation, in continuity with the Chosen People of the Old Testament, realizing a Messianic present here and now, but still journeying towards the final achievement of God's plan. Moreover, there is much less danger of making the Church a Platonic idea with seemingly little relation to the actual reality of the community. The theme of the People of God starts from the community, forces us to give attention to the role of every member and leads us to consider the hierarchy as a service within the community. Since it keeps us in touch with the human reality of the Church as a community, we are not tempted to lose sight of sin and failure within the Church. While the Church is indeed an exalted mystery, it does not do to blur all distinctions in praising it and forget the inadequacy, the sin and the need for reform that is always within the Church during its pilgrimage on earth.

So, having discovered the mystery of the Church during the first period, theology has

in this present, second period passed on to a wider but at the same time more exact, a more realistic because more complete understanding of the Church. This has enabled it to enter into a closer dialogue with other Christians, and it is now discussing the range of problems that arise in connexion with the work for reunion. The encyclical *Mystici Corporis* does not mention the theme of the People of God; it does not therefore represent the present pattern of development. After it appeared in 1943 there was a pause in writing on the Church until the end of the Second World War. People were taking stock of the situation and, in any case, the war was a hindrance to serious theological work. After the war the development of ecclesiology continued, but along lines different from those of the encyclical. *Mystici Corporis* stands, however, as a clear, authoritative, balanced presentation of the first insight gained into the Church as a mystery.

Source of Tensions

This brief survey of the developing understanding of the Church that has marked this century allows us to see one reason, perhaps the chief, for present tensions within the Church. I mean the existence of varying conceptions of the Church, owing to the inevitable slowness with which a new understanding spreads. There are many whose understanding of the Church has not changed, except in so far as they have come to recognize the Church as a mystery, the Mystical Body of Christ; they do not share the further insights that lie behind the demand for change and renewal in the life of the Church. Those bishops who are leading the present movement of renewal have gained a deeper understanding of the Church.

For the sake of clarity, we can distinguish two opposing conceptions of the Church, while recognizing that many intermediate attitudes are in fact found.

The first conception views the Church as having the structure of a pyramid. At the top is the Pope: the people form the base. The Pope by himself has the fullness of power within the Church. All hierarchical powers are transmitted through him. Beneath him are the bishops. These are not seen in their relation to one another as

forming an episcopal college, but simply each in relation to the Pope. The horizontal bonds of unity between the local Churches are ignored; only the vertical bond with the Pope as visible head matters. Every bishop, then, is regarded as quite independent of the others, his powers being limited only by the Pope who governs the whole Church through the Roman Curia. The bishops are concerned only with their own dioceses; they have a part to play in regard to the universal Church only in so far as the Pope imparts a share in his function to them. Beneath the bishops are the priests, who, representing the local bishop, exercise a pastoral function in his name. Finally come the faithful, the base of the pyramid. Their duty is simply to obey the authorities above them as representatives of Christ. They must attend church, where sacrifice and prayer are offered in their name by the ordained minister, from whom they also receive the sacraments. Since these work *ex opere operato*, provided there are minimum dispositions, it is not necessary that the faithful should understand what is said or follow what the priest does; all is well if they submit devoutly to what is done to them and for them.

The other conception of the Church starts from the level where all the members of the Church are equal. In other words, it starts from the faithful—and all, without exception, Pope, bishops, priests and laity, belong to the faithful. The faithful are the believing followers of Christ, formed into a sacramental community by baptism and confirmation, thus constituting the new People of God, a royal and a priestly people, with the Spirit dwelling in all the members, with all united to Christ and sharing his priesthood and all having equal access to the mystery of Christ and communion with him at the spiritual level. Although existing permanently, this sacramental community is brought to a fuller reality at each liturgical celebration. Of its nature a liturgical celebration is a community celebration, because it is an actualization of the Church as the general sacrament. For its normal fulfilment, therefore, an assembly is required in which everyone has an active part in the celebration, so that the reality of the Church is given visible expression. This visible expression

achieved by the active participation of the assembly in the celebration is part of the structure of the sacraments, especially of the Eucharist, and has a bearing on their efficacy.

Special Functions

Such, then, is the basic reality of the Church as the People of God and the community of salvation. Within this community, however, are persons with special functions and powers. These are the ordained ministers. They receive their functions and their powers in a consecration given by the action of Christ in a sacrament, though this consecration does not alter their essential equality with other members as regards their personal relation to Christ. Although the powers and functions are given from above by the action of Christ, they are given to be exercised as a service within the community and in union with it, not independently of it. If the authority of the ministers is from above, they have no special source of information, nor does the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the Church come exclusively through them. They must act, then, in union with the community. They are there to represent its faith and see that it is handed on by sound teaching; they are there to preside over the liturgical celebration of the assembly, not to celebrate instead of the community; they are there to watch for the signs of the Spirit's action within the community and discern true from false; they are there to guide and rule, so that the freedom proper to all Christians will be exercised with order. The endowments they receive from Christ are given for a service within the community; their proper use calls for that close contact with the rest of the community which can be achieved only by consultation and willingness to learn from others and to work with them. The basic reality remains the community. Ministers are not outside and independent of it, ruling it as from a great height.

The principal ordained ministers are the bishops, who have the fullness of the ministerial priesthood. But what comes first in the episcopate is not the individual bishop, but the bishops as a corporate body, as forming the college of bishops. Each bishop is placed over a local Church but only in

becoming a member of the episcopal body, so that his episcopate is possessed in union with his fellow-bishops; and as forming one body with them he shares a concern not for his diocese alone but for the region, country, continent, indeed for the Church of the world. This is the meaning of the collegiality of the episcopate, which is being intensively studied at the moment. The mission of the bishops is a collegial one; they are not independent atoms. The juridical expression of this mission in the practical jurisdictional relations between bishops of a country or region, between bishops singly or in conference and the Pope, is a matter that has changed and can change according to varying situations and needs. The important point to grasp is that bishops hold their office in union with one another, bound together by many ties, and are intended to work with one another for the good of the Church; they are not independent entities linked only to the Pope at the centre.

The Episcopal College

The bishops as a body have the supreme power in teaching and ruling the Church. Within the episcopal body, however, there is the chief bishop, the bishop of Rome, the successor of St Peter. The function of the Pope is to exercise within the episcopal college—not outside of it or independently of it—a special mission of unification. This involves a universal teaching authority and a universal jurisdiction, but the practical way in which these are exercised can vary.

The bishops are assisted in their task by other ordained ministers, chiefly priests, who co-operate with them in their service of the community.

We start, then, with the Church as the People of God, the Messianic community. *Within* that community there is the episcopal body to serve it. *Within* the episcopal body is the Pope, the Servant of the Serv-

ants of God. *Within* each local Church there is the bishop serving his community with the aid of his priests and keeping it in communion with the rest of the Church by his union and co-operation with his fellow-bishops and the Pope. The ministry within the community does not alter the fundamental equality of all the members in their access to the salvation of Christ. The Spirit dwells in all, and all are called to take part in the life and mission of the Church and in its liturgical celebrations. Throughout the organization of the Church the principle of subsidiarity should obtain, in order that no unnecessary restriction should be placed on the freedom that belongs to all Christians in virtue of their liberation by Christ. The principle means that what can be done at a lower level should not be taken over by a higher authority. What can be done by the individual should not be taken from him by those in charge of the community. What can be done by a subordinate community should not be taken over by the greater community.

The Basic Issue

This—very briefly sketched—is the new conception of the Church that has emerged, chiefly over the last two decades, and stands in opposition to the older, narrower conception. The opposition between the two conceptions lies behind the opposing attitudes to liturgical reform, to reform in general and to the ecumenical movement. The present renewal will gain ground in proportion as the new and deeper understanding of the Church becomes more general. Besides being the basis of renewal, the new understanding has made possible a dialogue with other Christians; they see their legitimate demands being met.

(Conclusion Next Month)



Liturgy and Unity

Rev. Frank B. Norris, S.S.

The liturgy—specifically the Mass—had a clear and definite shape as it came to us from Christ and the Apostles. Recall that the Eucharist was celebrated on Holy Thursday night not as a brief and hurried ritual once the Passover Meal had been concluded, but as an integral part of that meal. The breaking and distribution of the bread, the drinking from a common cup of wine, the blessings or prayers of thanksgiving recited over the food and drink were not ceremonials devised by Christ. They were traditional parts of the Passover or Seder meal. What our Savior did was to give them new meaning and reality.

The unleavened bread was no longer simply a memorial of the "bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt"; it was Christ's own afflicted body, broken for us on the gibbet. The wine was no longer just a symbol of Israel's joyful gratitude for its deliverance of old; it was our true thanksgiving to God, the very blood of Jesus Christ, which washes us clean from our sins and makes us exultant members of the royal and priestly People of God.

New meaning, new reality Christ gave to the ancient Breaking of the Bread and the Drinking of the Cup. Yet our new, our Christian Eucharist came to us in vital continuity with the Jewish Passover; and its basic shape and significance were thus determined by the centuries-old rite which had preceded it and gave it birth. Now the Passover Meal was characterized by the following traits:

1) It was a joyful, communal banquet which at once proclaimed and deepened the unity of God's People;

2) It was a memorial of past deliverance, a sign of present divine favor, and a pledge of future redemption;

3) It was a divinely instituted and therefore acceptable worship of God.

In a word, by celebrating the Passover Israel showed dramatically *who she was*: a holy, united People of God called into being for the joyful worship of her saving and redeeming Lord.

The basic shape and sense of our Christian Eucharist, then, is clear. It is no impoverished, minimally sufficient rite meant merely to bring to the individual Christian the grace necessary for his salvation. Rather it is a full, rich, efficacious sign of all that we are in Christ: the new Israel, the holy, united, worshipping children of God our Father. And the external structure of the Eucharist as it came to us from Christ—the structure intended to show forth and convey all of the infinitely rich spiritual realities of the Mass—was that of a joyful, fraternal meal.

The meal-structure of the Eucharist was clearly to the forefront of the Church's consciousness during the first centuries of its life. For stripped of its non-essentials, what was—what is—the Mass in its external shape except placing of food upon a table, an act of thanksgiving or "grace" recited over the food, and the consumption of the elements thus blessed?

We are fortunate in having come down to us from the middle of the second century a description of the celebration of Mass which is one of our most treasured documents from the early Church. Listen to St. Justin's brief but precious account of

A paper delivered at the *Fourth National Conference on Doctrine and Ecumenism*, San Francisco, April 30-May 2, 1963. Sponsored by Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and the Paulist Institute for Religious Research. Father Norris teaches at St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park, California; and is author of *God's Own People*, Helicon Press.

how Christians of his day celebrated the Supper of the Lord:

"At the end of the prayers we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water. Taking them he offers up praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and gives thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. When he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings all the people express their joyful assent by saying 'Amen'. . . . And when the president has given thanks and all the people have expressed their joyful assent, those who are called by us 'deacons' give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine-mixed-with-water, over which the thanksgiving was pronounced; and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.

"And this food is called among us 'Eucharist,' of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true and who has been washed with the washing that is for remission of sins and unto a second birth, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these. But as Jesus Christ our Savior . . . had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food that is blessed by the word of prayer transmitted by Him is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh."

One In Christ

There is much that we do not know about the details of this second century celebration of Mass. What we would not give, for example, to have the text of the great prayer of thanksgiving recited over the bread and wine! Yet how much we can learn from the laconic words of Justin. The Christians who come together are manifestly one in Christ: "We salute one another with a kiss." Although a "president" leads the assembly, the celebration is the action of all present: "All the people express their joyful assent." And it is just that—a joyful assent. For the themes of the presidential prayer—praise and thanksgiving to God—are clearly the cause of their

renewed joy in the Lord. Finally, the sacred food, "the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh," is the source of their oneness, for even absent brethren must needs be given a share in it lest their absence weaken the bonds of the brotherhood.

Such, in brief, was the shape and the sense of the Holy Eucharist as it came to us from our Lord and as it wonderfully developed in the first years of the Church's life.

Eve of Reformation

It is centuries later now, at the end of the medieval period, during the years immediately preceding the tragedy of the Reformation. What is the shape of the Mass thirteen hundred years after Justin's famous description? How is the Holy Eucharist understood? Bread and wine are still placed upon a table or altar, as it is now called. A prayer of thanksgiving is still recited over the bread and wine, although the consistent emphasis upon Godward praise and glory is not quite so evident now. Belief in the presence of the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ beneath the bread and wine has not lessened, surely, in the intervening centuries. Yet although these essentials remain, we note some important—and disturbing—differences in the Mass of the late fifteenth century:

1) What shocks us most is that normally only the president—the priest—partakes of the sacred meal. When, perhaps two or three times a year—the people do eat of the meal, they receive the Bread alone. The Cup is no longer offered to them.

2) The sense of a joyful, communal celebration is all but lost. The people no longer voice their united 'Amen' to the prayer of thanksgiving.

3) The prayer of thanksgiving or canon is no longer audible to the worshipping community. Not even the all-essential words of Jesus at the Last Supper are recited aloud. Even if they were, however, they would be unintelligible to the average worshipper, for the Mass has for centuries been celebrated in a language the people do not understand.

4) The people present at the Mass appear to be, above all, spectators concerned principally with one thing—*seeing* the consecrated Bread or Host, or, as they put it,

"seeing God." The very action of the great prayer of thanksgiving is now interrupted immediately after the words of institution by an elevation of the Bread so that the congregation may gaze upon it.

5) As to the sense and meaning of the Mass, we note that it has come to be viewed principally—I do not say uniquely—as *something beneficial to us* rather than as a joyful act of praise, thanksgiving, and worship of God.

Age of Luther

Father Jungmann and others have made a study of the Mass in the years just before Luther, the Mass as Luther himself knew it; and it is not an altogether pretty picture that they paint for us. It is true that the Christian people made much over the Holy Eucharist. The number of priests and of masses celebrated multiplied almost without end. Chantries were endowed and staffed with priests, "altarists," they were called, whose sole function was the celebration of Mass—indeed many masses each day—for the intentions of the founder of the benefice. While this feverish multiplication of masses is not entirely without theological justification, still one cannot help feeling that all is not well.

Our malaise at the situation is only confirmed, furthermore, when we learn precisely what effects were most of all expected of the Mass. Were the ends in view primarily of a high spiritual order—a greater love of God and a deeper sense of selfless charity to our neighbor, a greater apostolic zeal and a heightened awareness of our vocation to redemptive suffering for the sake of the Church—we would not be so disturbed. But what we find is a strange mixture of spiritual and temporal benefits that are expected of attendance at Mass, in a way that at times clearly smacks of superstition. It was thought, for example, that gazing at the Host during the consecration would somehow protect one that day from blindness or a sudden death. Again, it would, in almost mechanical fashion, remit sins of the tongue, and so on.

Even when the effects that are dwelt upon are spiritual rather than temporal, the way in which the emphasis is placed was bound to foster misunderstanding in the minds of the uninformed. Votive masses

and series of masses for special intentions abounded, oftentimes attended by the most unqualified assurances of unfailing results. In one fourteenth century missal we read the sweeping statement: "If a person finds himself in any dire straits whatsoever and celebrates or has celebrated these thirty masses, he will be freed from his difficulty without delay."

Father Jungmann has this to say about the Mass at the moment when the frightful storm of the Reformation broke upon Christendom:

"The holiest of the Church's possessions remained, it is true, the center of genuine piety. But alas, the clouds and shadows surrounding this center brought matters to such a pass that the Institution of Jesus, that well of life from which the Church had drawn for fifteen hundred years, became an object of scorn and ridicule and was repudiated as a horrible idolatry" (THE MASS OF THE ROMAN RITE, I, p. 132).

Popular Understanding

Here we have, in part, an explanation of the reaction of the reformers to the Mass as they knew it in their day. They would put aside in an absolute and unqualified fashion any theory of the Mass that would make it an action on our part in any wise offered to God for spiritual or temporal blessings. And they did not lack grist for their mills. Very effective, we are told, were the charges that masses, especially masses for the dead, were no more than a means of fleecing the people. Thus because of the low state to which the use of and popular understanding of the Mass had sunk, whole peoples were induced to abandon their Catholic heritage with an alacrity and a zeal which are as humiliating for us to reflect upon as they are shocking and tragic.

The official reaction of the Church to the protest of the reformers was a full two generations late in coming. By that time the Reformation was well established. Sides had been taken and positions hardened, so that the likelihood of a thoroughgoing reform of the celebration of the Mass was all but non-existent. And so it turned out. The Council of Trent made the necessary doctrinal precisings concerning the Holy Eucharist; it outlawed the scandals and abuses

surrounding the offering of the Mass; and it provided for a legislation that would guarantee a decent and respectful celebration of the Holy Sacrifice. But in no sense did Trent give us an imaginative and creative reformation of the Mass which would restore sharply and unquestionably to the structure of the Eucharist the basic shape of a communal, joyful meal that was the great glory of the Eucharist of the early Church.

To assert this is not to stand in judgment upon those who manfully struggled to reform Catholicism from within during the sixteenth century. The means at their disposal for a creative reformation of the Church's liturgy were extremely limited. They had to work, too, under pressure and against great odds. Lethargy, inertia, indifference and, at times, positive hostility they met on all sides. But the objective fact remains that there was no true reform of the liturgy at Trent or during the period of the Counter-Reformation.

Doctrine and Worship

It follows, then, that since the way for the Church most perfectly to express her very being—that of a holy, united, and worshipping people under Christ—is in and through the Holy Eucharist, that expression will necessarily be limited and impoverished to the extent that the external shape of the Eucharist is imbalanced or obscured. At any moment in the life of the Church, the way in which the liturgy is celebrated reflects the Church's understanding of herself. *Liturgy is ecclesiology in action.* The early Church reflected its full and rich understanding of herself in a full and rich celebration of the Lord's Supper. The medieval Church reflected her imperfect understanding of herself in the manner in which she celebrated and viewed the Holy Eucharist. So it is at all times. The way we offer the Mass is a clear index of how we view our common life in Christ.

We have come to a point when we can understand the profound doctrinal significance of the present-day liturgical renewal within the Church. We say—and rightly so—that the liturgical renewal is concerned with restoring the full sign-value of the Mass and of the other sacraments, that it wishes to make the Eucharist be for our

people exactly what Jesus Christ wants it to be for them.

But we must go on to acknowledge that the liturgical renewal and the revitalized ecclesiology of our day are inseparably linked. An informed liturgist must at the same time be, in a very true sense, an ecclesiologist. And a theologian cannot be an informed ecclesiologist without a deep and active interest in the worship of the Church. To the extent that the celebration of the Mass today is recapturing many of its long-neglected elements, to that extent it is becoming increasingly a more complete and authentic profession of faith in the nature of the Christian community. *Lex orandi lex credendi.* The way we pray reflects what we believe. Our faith governs our form of worship.

Parallel Renewal

When we reflect, furthermore, that for many years now a parallel liturgical renewal has been going on among our separated brothers—Anglicans, Lutherans, and Presbyterians, in particular—we can see immediately the significance and role of liturgical worship in our quest for Christian unity. If, and this is the case, the liturgical life of Anglicans and Protestants is becoming more "Catholic"—I do not say Roman Catholic—then their understanding of the nature of the Church is becoming more Catholic. Imprecisions of expression and areas of obscurity may indeed remain, but there is at least a beginning of a more Catholic ecclesiology. And to the extent that generations of Anglican and Protestant Christians will be formed by a more Catholic worship, to that extent will their minds and hearts be opened to a more Catholic view of Christianity.

The liturgies that have been adopted by such recently formed groups as the Church of South India, the Taizé community in France, the Lutheran League for Evangelical-Catholic Reunion in Germany, and the liturgical celebrations in many Anglican and Lutheran churches in this country are truly admirable in their Catholic structure and spirit. Indeed, viewed as external rites, they are at times better expressions of the nature of the Church as a holy, united, and worshipping people under Christ than is our present Roman Rite, even when cele-

brated with full participation. What is particularly remarkable about these non-Catholic liturgies is the excellence of their canons or consecratory prayers. They have incorporated the predominant themes of Godward praise and glory and maintained the splendid spirit of the ancient anaphoras in a way we can only envy.

We must rejoice, therefore, at the recoveries of truly Catholic elements of worship on the part of our separated brothers. For these represent the single most significant factor bringing us closer together in the contemporary ecumenical movement. Few are those Catholics or Protestants who can follow a technical discussion on the pros and cons of transubstantiation. Fewer still are the theologians of either persuasion who have something really significant to say about the doctrine. Only the historically and theologically sophisticated can follow or enter into a debate on the development of the Roman Primacy or the still more obscure and tangled vagaries of the sacrament of Penance or the practice of indulgences.

But all, old and young, wise and unlettered, worship together before one altar and under one Lord. All are open to the one Spirit who comes to us in Word and

Sacrament. If, then, the way in which we worship a common Father is more and more profoundly Catholic, and, therefore, more and more profoundly at one, we shall have taken the most important step within our power to bridge the gap of separation and overcome the scandal of disunion. All other means must continue to be employed: theological discussion on the part of competent churchmen and scholars; friendly encounters and joint activity whenever and however possible; anything that will contribute in whatever way to lessen the intellectual, psychological, and historical barriers between us.

But we cannot forget the real cause of our separation, both in its beginnings and in its continuation. It is sin: our pride, our failure to love, our mediocrity. *The* antidote to the breach caused by sin is the broken body of Jesus Christ which we penitently offer as our worship to God and receive as the only medicine for the healing of the nations.

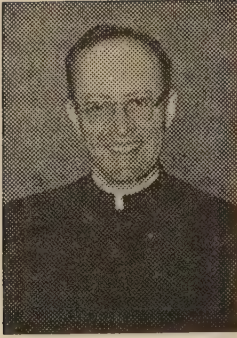
A more Catholic contact with the mystery of the Lord's triumphant death, whether sacramentally or in spirit, is our most powerful means to Christian unity. Truly Eucharistic men cannot remain forever *separated* brothers.

Here is The News

"The Redemption-mystery of the Christ is not an idea, but a Story of an Event which is still happening. Jesus is born, He has suffered the Passion, He is risen and ascended, He will return. His death and His resurrection make real what the Old Testament had only hinted at: the true deliverance, the entry into the true Land of Promise, in a word the Pasch. But the Pasch of the Christ will become finally ours only at the blessed day of His return.

"All the Church's life, all her prayers, consists in keeping in mind the Christ, in living His Pasch by the sacraments, in looking for His return."

—Abbé A. G. Martimort



CATECHETICAL MATERIALS

The Pious Society of the Daughters of St. Paul is a Papal Congregation whose special purpose is to propagate the Faith through modern media. At present they have twelve Book and Film Centers throughout this country. They have several more in other countries. A complete catalogue of their material may be obtained by writing to:

Daughters of St. Paul
50 St. Paul's Avenue
Jamaica Plain
Boston 30, Mass.

They have sent one of their offerings to *Guide* for review. It is **THE HOLY MASS**. It comes on two film strips which together contain over one hundred frames. A long-playing, high-fidelity record accompanies the strips. The commentary on the record is also printed in a booklet which is part of the package.

The strip films are in color. There is something vaguely unsatisfactory about the quality of the color, but a judgment here is highly subjective. The eye of this reviewer was not spontaneously delighted by it, but it did not distract from the purpose of the film.

The purpose is to give a reverent, step by step explanation of each part of the Mass and the actions of the priest. This is done in great detail and with simple clarity. From time to time the commentary stresses the point that the Mass is not a private priestly function, but the sacrifice of the whole congregation in union with Christ.

The narrator does an excellent job. He uses a simple, matter-of-fact tone without any of the laryngeal effort that sometimes mars the work of a professional reader trying to squeeze too much out of his script.

At times one hears faint organ music in the background. Occasionally it swells and takes over between sections of the commentary. As long as it is unobtrusively in the background, it provides a fitting touch. It seems pointless, however, to take it from its semi-obscurity and give it equal prominence with the narration. This is an intrusion on the purpose of the film.

Those who are teaching the Mass on almost any level will find this production quite adequate to the task of illustrating the actions taking place at the altar. If it is used without the record, the printed booklet will assist in the preparation of one's personal explanation. Tests in our New York Center have indicated that adults in an inquiry class prefer the living narration of the priest they have come to know.

Over a long series of instructions, it is usually helpful to introduce a change of pace. Instead of an uninterrupted lecture, it is desirable to try a demonstration. The lessons on the Mass is a particularly appropriate occasion for the use of some sort of visual aid. In the long run, the people will learn the true significance of the Mass by actually seeing what takes place at the altar and by actual participation at the Holy Sacrifice. To prepare the people for all this some use of the modern media of demonstration is most welcome and it is an acknowledged, effective teaching aid.

The price tag on the film strip and record is reasonable. The cost is \$20.00 with a 20% discount to clergy and religious. Those who have hesitated to buy visual aids because of the price may find themselves able to invest in this.

JAMES B. LLOYD, C.S.P.

READING I'VE LIKED

Millions of words have poured out on the subject of the Second Vatican Council. But many will find *The Johannine Council* (Witness to Unity), by Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R., the most penetrating treatment of its inner significance. Father Häring—a leading contemporary theologian, participant in numerous modern apostolates, associate and adviser to prominent figures at the Council—is signally fitted to write on the ultimate goals of the Council. “As we see it at this writing,” he writes, “the Second Vatican Council is the grand Council of the Church endeavoring to grasp her own essence and mission in the light of the great mystery of unity.” And in twelve brief, stimulating chapters, he develops the principal aspects of this theme. (Herder and Herder, \$3.50).

Father F. X. Durrwell, C.Ss.R., eminent Swiss theologian wrote a theological best seller when he published *The Resurrection*. The same writer with *In the Redeeming Christ* (Towards a Theology of Spirituality) treats of certain applications of his earlier volume to the daily life of Christ's followers. In it he insists that “The center and fullness of salvation is Christ the redeemer, the Son of God in his death and resurrection.” And he succeeds admirably in his stated objective: “The one ambition this book has is that of *never* seeing the Christian life except in relation to Christ the redeemer who is its center.” (Sheed and Ward, \$5.00).

A helpful, brief book on the New Testament is *Meet the Bible!—New Testament* by Rev. John J. Castlot, S.S. (The Helicon Press, \$4.95). The author's previous books have established for him a high standing among those who wish to be guided to the treasures of the Scriptures by one who is as scholarly as he is readable.

An attractive, short treatment of many basic themes connecting the Old and New Testaments is *Lamb of God* (The Promise and Fulfillment of Salvation) by Augustine Stock, O.S.B. Topics like Election, Covenant, People of God, Salvation, Kingdom of God and others help the reader trace God's self-revelation of Himself to the Chosen

People fulfilling all these earlier promises, beyond all expectation, in Christ and His New Covenant. (Herder and Herder, \$3.95).

Assumptions and attitudes regarding unbelief and atheism in the past were apt to oversimplify a tragically complicated state of soul. Father Ignace Lepp, an atheist himself until his twenty-seventh year, and now a priest and able psychotherapist, distinguishes five kinds of atheists and devotes illuminating chapters to each. He discusses with informed sympathy atheists who are neurotic, Marxist, rationalists, existentialist and those who profess atheism in the name of value. A most illuminating chapter treats of the “Unbelief of Believers.” *Atheism in Our Time*, translated by Rev. Bernard Murchland, C.S.C., (The Macmillan Co., \$5.00).

GUIDE

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GUIDE

411 West 59th Street
New York 19, New York

Guide Lights

CONVERTS: U.S.A. . . .

This scribe remembers the enthusiasm with which the 1947 edition of the Catholic Directory was received by those most interested in convert work. In that year, for the first time, there were more than 100,000 converts. There were only 628 more, but only one was needed. For 100,000 was a magic number like the four minute mile, the seventeen foot pole vault, or sixty home runs. It was something for which the Catholic papers were saving their special large type.

For the next few years there was general rejoicing that we did not slip back beneath this numerical peak. In fact, the number of converts kept mounting till 1952 when it fell from an unprecedented 121,950 to 117,803. In 1954 there was another upward surge. The Directory recorded only 116,696 in that year, but the figure was afterwards adjusted to 126,577 on the basis of late returns, largely from the Military Ordinariate. In the following year, it climbed to 137,310. It passed the 140,000 mark in 1957 and reached its all time high in 1960 with 142,267. The Directory gives a higher figure of 146,212, but research by the Paulist Institute finds this almost 4,000 too high. During the next three years there was a pattern of decline. In the latest figures this decline has led us to the lowest point in ten years. In the statistics published in 1963 only 125,670 converts were recorded. All these figures, of course, reflect the year preceding their publication. The figures for 1963 will be tabulated early in 1964 and issued in the 1964 Directory.

CONVERTS PER PRIEST . . .

During the fat years there was, perhaps, a touch of pelagian complacency in the recitation of gains, but there has really been no reason for even a suggestion of smugness at even the best of times. A little analysis should convince the most optimistic that we have never done well in bringing converts into the Church. We have only been less worse in some times than in others. A survey of the last ten years should demonstrate this.

One way of assessing the figures is to divide them by the number of priests. This

process discloses that in none of the last ten years has there been as many as three converts per priest in the country. The closest to this was in 1955 when the average was 2.93. The farthest removed is 1963 with 2.22. The mean for the ten year period stands at 2.64.

Some areas are considerably above this mean, and others are quite a bit below it. The Pacific (including Alaska and Hawaii along with Washington, Oregon, and California) is the highest with 4.74. This record is due in large measure to the Diocese of San Diego which has never been below seven converts per priest in these ten years, and in 1955 went as high as 19.3. The lowest is New England which has an accumulated percentage of 1.14.

The interesting thing in these two areas is that New England is almost 50% Catholic (48.1), and the Pacific is less than 20% (18.5). Yet, there is a ragged pattern here. For the three areas which have more than 20% Catholics average only 1.75. These are New England, Middle Atlantic, and East North Central. Though it should be noted that the East North Central region (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin) is above the national average with 2.82. At the same time, the other six areas, each with less than 20% Catholics, average 3.23.

This may suggest that there are more converts in these areas because there are more non-Catholics from which to draw. Yet, as a general rule, information centers with regular inquiry classes seem to do better where there is a relatively high percentage of Catholics. Perhaps the complexity of parish life where there are many Catholics is a possible explanation. The priests have too many claims on their attentions to work energetically in the convert apostolate. In a mission field atmosphere it is a more pressing obligation.

CONVERTS PER PARISH . . .

We should also understand that more and more priests are being charged with non-parochial work. They are in administrative capacities or teaching in schools. Consequently, we might get a better idea of the ebb and flow of converts by dividing the figures not by the number of priests, but

by the number of parishes with resident pastors. Is there any significant decrease over the ten year period in converts per parish?

Here the mean number is 8.4 for the country. The highest it reached was 8.9 in 1955. The lowest is 7.4 in 1963. There is a variation of 1.49, or roughly one and one-half converts per parish. This does not seem very large if we think in terms of a single parish, but it comes close to 25,000 converts if we multiply one and a half by the number of parishes in the country.

The greatest variation is found in the Pacific area. From a high of 18.3 in 1960, the number fell to 13.0 in 1963. Nevertheless, the average there is the highest of all regions in the ten year period. It stands at 15.5. The lowest variation is in New England which has .7. It also has the dubious distinction of having the lowest average figure with 4.5.

The alarming thing both in the figures of converts per priest and converts per parish is that in almost all of the nine areas the decrease has occurred in the last three years. In the case of converts per parish, for example, seven of the nine areas had their two worst years in 1962 and 1963. Only the Mountain area and the East South Central deviated, but each of them had one of their two leanest years in 1962 or 1963.

CATHOLICS PER CONVERT . . .

There is another way of looking at the statistics. It is by asking how many Catholics there are for each convert in the different areas. The answer gives us a wide range; all the way from 119 Catholics per convert in the East South Central (Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi) with a Catholic percentage in the population of 4.6%, to 656 Catholics per convert in New England, which has a Catholic percentage of 48.1%.

We might be tempted to draw some neat conclusions if there were a ratio between the number of Catholics per convert and the size of the Catholic population in each area. It does not work out this way, but it does approach it. The South Atlantic area (Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, the Virginias and Carolinas, Georgia and Florida) follows the East South Central with a Catholic percentage in the population of 9.0%. It is also second in the number of Catholics per convert with 154. The West South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas) is a cheater. It is third in Catholic population (15%) but seventh in Catholics per convert

with 359. The Pacific is fourth in both lists. It has a Catholic percentage of 18.5 and 195 Catholics per convert. The Mountain area is fifth in Catholic population (18.6%) and sixth in Catholics per convert with 237. The West North Central which is sixth in population in the ascending scale we have been using (19.6%) is third in Catholics per convert with 179.

Overall the figures tell us that there are 279 Catholics per convert throughout the country. This is 160 above the lowest figure of 119. If all the areas were able to measure up, or down, to this lowest figure, we would have quite a different picture. For example, if each area had had one convert for each 119 Catholics in 1962, the figures published in 1963 would not have read 125,670. They would have been 368,500.

This, however, is dreaming. The fact is that, despite all the emphasis on the lay apostolate in recent years, more and more Catholics are needed to account for one convert. It would seem that this particular apostolate has been somewhat neglected. This was demonstrated in a study made ten years ago, and one wonders if the same study repeated might not give an even more dismal picture today of lay activity in seeking conversions. The study referred to showed that whereas 59% of Protestants had tried to interest someone in their church, only 28% of Catholics had. In addition, 43% of the Protestants reported success in their efforts and only 17% of the Catholics.

WHAT DO YOU THINK . . .

Protestant writers are concerned with a similar problem. During and after World War II, religious affiliation in the United States reached an all-time high. Two thirds of the American people had become members of some church. Last year, for the first time in a decade, church membership did not keep pace with population growth. The proportion of people who were church-members was fewer. Protestant observers saw the end of the "crisis return to religion."

In future issues of Guide we hope to explore in greater depth the convert situation in each area. As we do this, we would welcome observations from readers in these areas. In this way we may be able to get some clearer ideas on what lies behind success and failure insofar as conversion is a human problem. We already know that man's only response to the divine mystery is prayer.

JOHN J. KEATING, C.S.P

AT YOUR SERVICE

Index And Back Issues

Due to numerous requests, back issues of Vol. 3 of **Techniques for Convert Makers** (our former title) and Vols. 4 and 5 of **GUIDE** are available and ready for binding. An index is included with each set.

\$2.00 for each set.



Kits For Convert Work

The Paulist Institute has prepared a kit to assist priests in their parish convert work. This kit is arranged according to the following progression: (1) The creation of good-will through the works of Christian charity; (2) specific means of winning a hearing, with extensive material on the method of the Open House or Friendship Sunday; (3) ideas on instruction from registration to visual aids; (4) ideas on the reception of converts and their after-care.

We think that priests who are interested in convert work will be pleased with this material. Those who have already received it have been, and some of them have promptly ordered additional kits for their friends.

The cost per kit is \$1.00.



Book Of Proceedings

The Third National Conference on Convert Work was held at Dunwoodie, 1961. The Book of Proceedings for this Conference is now available in limited quantity. We have 500 volumes selling at a price of \$2.00 which is approximately cost. The book is filled with practical suggestions for a parish program in convert work.

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Ecumenism in its modern form has evoked a favorable response wherever Christians dwell and are conscious of the sin of disunity. Yet, it took its root early in Europe which is now dotted with ecumenical centers. Places like Chevetogne in Belgium, where the quarterly *Irenikon* is published. Places like Geneva, the home of the World Council of Churches. Places like Taize, a monastery of Protestant monks dedicated to the cause of unity. Places like Rome, where the second Vatican Council is being held and where men of all faiths are gathered to observe and report.

In these and other centers of ecumenical interest there is much that can be learned. It is for this reason that the Paulist Institute has arranged with Air France to conduct a study tour in Europe for priests and ministers. It will leave from New York City on April 7, 1964, and make its first stop in Paris. From there the tour will go through Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, and finally arrive in Rome. At each center it visits competent men will explain the history and the hopes of the establishment. Part of the tour will be by motor coach and by boat down the Rhine. The longer portions will be by plane. All accommodations will be in first class hotels.

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